

Federal leases for resources removed by private companies from public lands, and it is supposed to be a guardian of our Nation's precious public resources.

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that the cozy relationships between MMS officials and oil and gas companies have allowed these companies to underreport the resources they remove from Federal lands and underpay the royalties they owe to the Federal Government. Evidence that MMS has failed to detect and pursue these violations by oil and gas companies is especially troubling as gas prices continue to rise, corporations make record profits, and average Americans are struggling to fill their gas tanks and make ends meet.

Most hard-working, taxpaying Americans would be outraged to know that these companies are cheating the Government out of these royalties which are a critical source of revenue for the U.S. Treasury and which would allow us to invest in other priorities.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE OF JANIE GALMON

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, it is a great honor, we all know, to represent the American people here in the people's House. We all work long hours. We spend a great deal of time here. And I would like to, at this moment, mark the extraordinary service of a woman who has chosen to retire after nearly 50 years of working here in the Capitol. I am referring, of course, to the very famous Janie Galmon.

My colleagues may not know her last name, but they are very familiar with Janie's fried chicken, which has been prepared for us on Wednesdays on a regular basis. She is someone who was working in this Capitol when President Kennedy was assassinated, and she regularly has shared with us stories about that.

She always showed up to work at 5 a.m. regardless of how late we were in the night before. We could be here, and she can be working downstairs mid-night, 1 o'clock, but she was always back here coming in with our friend, Sally, at 5 o'clock in the morning.

She has provided extraordinary service and sustenance to so many of us. Janie, after a half century, has chosen to retire. I want to wish her congratulations, a very happy retirement, and a very, very merry Christmas.

CARING FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, first let me wish a happy and

safe holiday to all our men and women in uniform who are serving here and abroad.

After watching the Department of Veterans Affairs face a \$1 billion shortfall during a time of war, I came into this Congress convinced that if we had the money to fight a war, we must have the money to treat the warrior.

One of the first votes that this Congress took was to increase funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. And one of our last votes of the year will be to provide \$6.7 billion in new funding to the Department to ensure that our Nation's veterans get the care they have earned.

The way the government spends its money is a true indication of its priorities. With this appropriations bill, our new Congress has shown that America's veterans are a top priority.

CONGRATULATING MAYOR CECIL PRUETT

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and to congratulate Mayor Cecil Pruett of Canton, Georgia, on a tremendous career and a well-deserved retirement. A true public servant and outstanding leader, Mayor Pruett will be retiring this month after 12 years as mayor of the City of Canton in Cherokee County, Georgia.

Mayor Pruett has always strived to better his community, and his broad experience has served his constituents well. The mayor was formerly the president of the Georgia Municipal Association, president of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Atlanta Regional Executive Committee.

An educator, he remains active in leadership posts at Reinhardt College, Georgia Baptist Children's Home, North Georgia Regional Development Center, and his own church where he serves as a deacon.

Mayor Pruett oversaw substantial economic growth in Canton over his 12 years, but he has always worked to preserve the small town charm that is a hallmark of Cherokee County. A southern gentleman in every way, Mayor Pruett and his honest leadership will be sincerely missed. We wish Cecil and his wife, Myrna, a happy and a healthy retirement.

DEMOCRATIC ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR

(Mr. HODES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HODES. Madam Speaker, as we prepare to complete this first year of the new Democratic Congress, I would like to take a moment to reflect on some of the major accomplishments that we have achieved on behalf of the

American people. As a member of the majority makers, the historic class of 2006, we have helped to restore integrity, idealism and imagination to the people's House. We increased the minimum wage for the first time in a decade and fully implemented the 9/11 Commission recommendations to better protect our Nation.

Since then, we have worked to ease the financial burdens that middle-class families face, passing the most sweeping college affordability package in more than 60 years, and yesterday, we approved an historic energy bill to declare our energy independence and help us address global warming, saving Americans anywhere from \$700 to \$1,000 a year in gas prices.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand with fellow Democrats for an American agenda, real security, healthy families, a thriving economy, with opportunity for all, not just a few at the top, and a sustainable future for our planet. I look forward to 2008.

SCHIP

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, it is so interesting to look at today's Whipping Post and see the myriad and vast range of the issues that are coming before us. And many of these are issues that should have been addressed months ago.

One of those that we are going to address first off this morning will be S. 2499. This is an issue that is going to deal with Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program. This should have been handled months ago. It has been running under a continuing resolution.

Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the congressional leadership has decided to finally take the politics out of this and to support SCHIP as it was currently put in place in 1997 by a Republican Congress and to keep the focus on children of the working poor who need access to health care.

I support this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to do likewise and to continue to support SCHIP as it was originally put in place in 1997 by a Republican Congress.

□ 1030

PRESIDENT BUSH IS OUT OF TOUCH WHEN HE SAYS THE ECONOMY IS STRONG

(Mr. ELLISON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, earlier this week President Bush showed us that his view of the economy does not match that of the overwhelming majority of Americans. That is when he tried to convince the Nation that the economy was strong for everyone.